



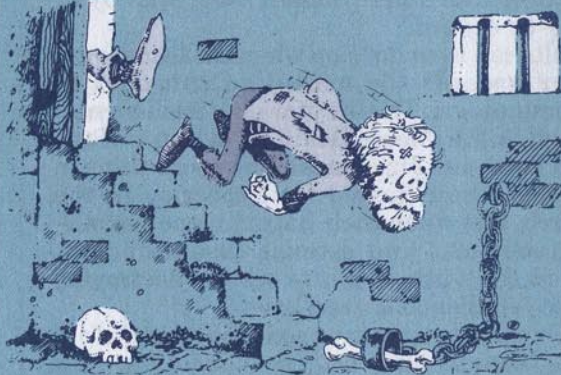
But that slave went out and found one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, "Pay back what you owe."

MATTHEW 18:28

sins have been forgiven by Jesus, you've had an incredible debt erased. Any bitterness or unforgiveness in your heart, after the total amnesty you've received, makes you as bad as the unmerciful slave. His unforgiveness was not only stupid, it also blew the whole deal with the king!

"When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord... Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?'

"And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him." Then Jesus



And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. MATTHEW 18:34

adds the stinger... "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Jesus certainly couldn't have made Himself any clearer about how upset our Father in heaven gets when, after forgiving us for an eternal debt of sin, we hold some little five-and-dime grudge against someone else "for whom Christ died."

I think it's also important to note that the debt the king had originally called off was now on again—and in full! This has many theological implications; but, since I'm no theologian (and the implicated subjects are perhaps some of the stickiest and most heavily debated in the Church today), I will safely say, "Whoever has ears, let him hear."

"IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING AGAINST YOUR BROTHER..."

At any rate, all this goes to warn us that if we have **anything** in our hearts against **anyone**, we should go to that person quickly and get the whole thing totally cleared up. It might be our parents, or an employer, a teacher, or even a husband or wife. But in the light of this parable, we can see that however much anyone has hurt us, it doesn't even compare to the free gift of God's pardon for our sins. We must not put that forgiveness in danger of being made void by our refusal to "go and do likewise." For the Word of God says, "If possible... be at peace with all men... [for] these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." (Rom. 12:18; II Cor. 5:18)

All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, ©The Lockman Foundation 1977.

"Forgiveness - Forgive Or Forget It!" was reprinted from an article in The Last Days Magazine, a colorfully illustrated publication filled with challenging articles, ministry opportunities, and more!

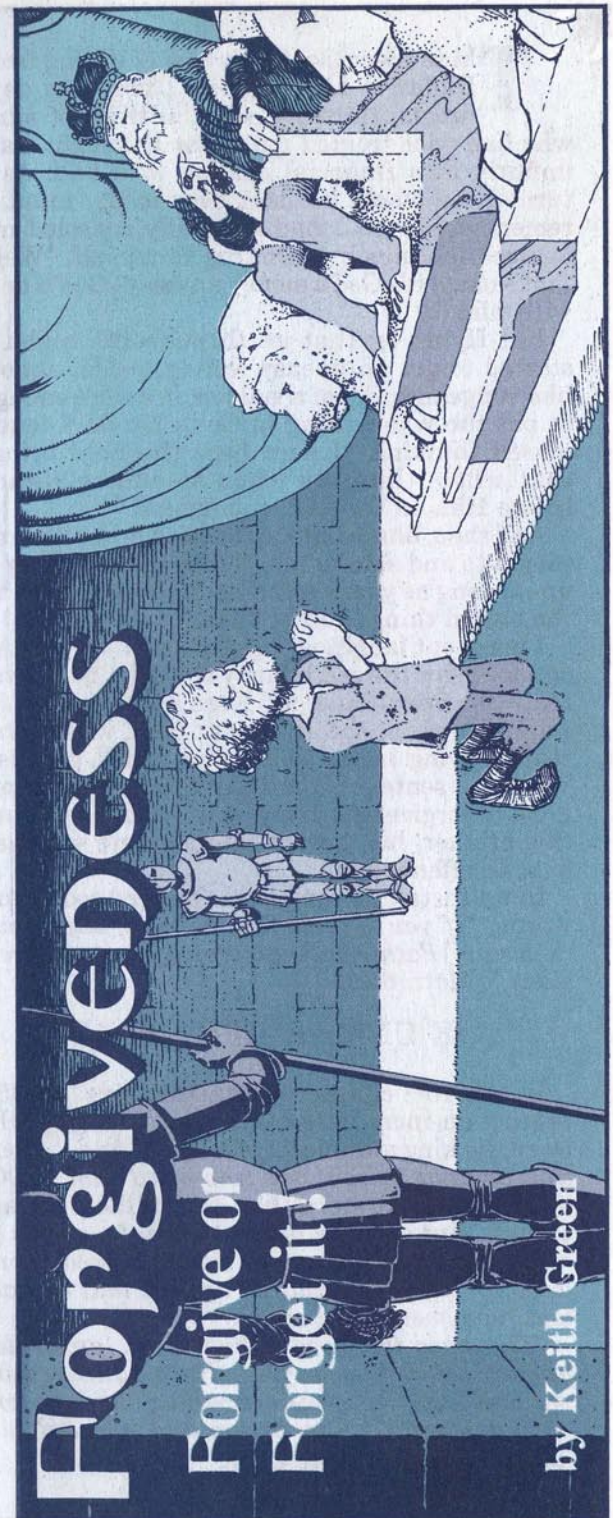
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WISE TRACKS

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4-93



by Keith Green

There I was, seated in row 17, flying from Dallas to Los Angeles. I began to daydream, thinking about a friend of mine who had once treated me (what I thought was) unfairly in a financial dealing we'd had. As I turned the whole incident over in my mind, I remembered how I had originally consoled my bruised feelings by thinking to myself, "Well, that's okay, it's God's money anyway—God'll deal with him."

But flying on that jet through the night, I started to get an uneasy feeling inside, almost like vengeance. All of a sudden, it wasn't enough to put the whole thing in God's hands. I found myself thinking, "I sure hope the Lord brings that whole thing up when so-and-so stands before Him on the day of judgment."

And then, immediately, the Lord broke into my thoughts and said to me, "I'll be glad to bring it up—as long as you don't mind Me bringing up all the stupid things you've done!"

I burst out laughing, right there in row 17. All at once I saw the sad hilarity of it all. I had never really forgiven him at all! Even with all my spiritualizing about the Judgment Seat, what I was really saying in my heart was, "He'll get his!" With one sentence, the Holy Spirit showed me gross unforgiveness in my heart—not only toward this brother, but toward many others who had hurt or offended me.

In an instant, I completely understood Jesus' words, "If you do not forgive men, then your [heavenly] Father will not forgive your transgressions." (Matt. 6:15)

THE UNMERCIFUL SLAVE

In the 18th chapter of Matthew (vs. 23-35), there's an incredible tale about this guy who owed the king a whole lot of money. "And... there was brought to him one who owed him 10,000 talents" (worth more than ten million dollars today). "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made."

"The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.' And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt."



And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave the debt. MATTHEW 18:27

I think the most beautiful part of this story is the fact that the king forgave him the debt...over ten million dollars worth!! The main reason he canceled it was that even though the slave promised to eventually repay it, it was obviously an impossible amount of debt to ever work off in one's lifetime. Therefore, in his compassion,

the king released him from it forever...or did he? Let's read on...

It says immediately in the very next verse (vs. 28), "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' He was unwilling, however, (to forgive him) but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed."

Can you imagine the nerve? You've just been forgiven ten million dollars, and instead of going out and celebrating, you go and find some poor Joe who owes you 18 bucks! He's probably heard about your good fortune through the grapevine and thinks you're gonna invite him to the party, when all of a sudden you start strangling the daylights out of him. And when he asks you to be patient and give him a few days to repay you, you refuse and throw him in jail.

It might not sound like something you'd do, but I bet you've done it before. You see, if your

A Root of Bitterness



Bitterness is a deadly thing—a real cancer. In Hebrews 12:15, it says, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled." According to this Scripture, bitterness cannot only hurt you, but it can spread like gangrene to others!

When you trace the life-histories of men like Adolph Hitler, for example, you find that the great evils they engaged in later in life had their roots in deep-seated hurts from early in their childhood.

The mass-murders of the Charles Manson family stemmed from Manson's bitterness toward a record producer who didn't like his music. Outraged, Manson sent his "family" to the producer's house (not knowing that he had moved) and told them to kill anyone they found there. The appalling result was that all of the victims ended up to be people who Manson had never even met, showing that when

bitterness runs unchecked in our hearts, it can spill over into other people's lives, and "by it, many be defiled."

Cults can even develop when the leaders get bitter towards the main-line churches or denominations. The life stories of such men as Joseph Smith, Moses David (Children of God), John Todd, and Jim Jones all have one thing in common—their hatred for hypocrisy in the Church. But when their hatred turned to self-righteousness and intense resentment, it ruined the faith of many others—destroying whole families and even lives.

"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom. 1:21)